

Guardians of convoys

Written by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Laura Goodgame Regional Command-East Public Affairs Advisory Team

Saturday, 17 April 2010 12:45 - Last Updated Sunday, 18 April 2010 04:57

PAKTYA PROVINCE, Afghanistan – As we roll through the streets of Gardez in our mine resistant ambush protected vehicles, the buildings lining the street tell stories of gun fights, suicide bombers, and improvised explosive devices. When in the middle of a potentially dangerous situation, one of the people you learn to trust is your gunner, who has a bird's eye view of everything from the vehicle's turret.

U.S Army Spc. Florante Rivera a 30 year-old San Diego, California native is sitting in the gunner's seat exposed to nearly all the external danger in the convoy while protecting fellow servicemembers.

Florante is in the middle of his second deployment. During his first tour he was an infantryman in Iraq however this current deployment is a logistics supply specialist, not a gunner by military occupational specialty. However, it was a job that needed to be filled once he arrived in Afghanistan.

"Rivera was more than excited to go back to his infantry roots" said U.S. Army Spc. Ari Konovitz, a medic assigned to the 5 3 alpha battery battalion out of Fort Lewis, Washington.

According to fellow Soliders, Rivera does his job and does it well.

"He has been 'gunning' the entire time we've been deployed to Afghanistan and has not let anyone sneak up on our convoy," said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Dawn Thomas.

Rivera keeps family photos of his wife and two kids in his wallet when he rolls out.

"I think about lots of things before we leave the wire, mainly I think about my wife though" said Rivera. "I arrived in country later than the rest of my team from Fort Lewis, Washington. My command let me stay behind to watch the birth of my daughter Deanna in January".

Not only does Rivera endure all the stress of being a convoy gunner, he also faces off against the harsh Afghan climate. However, with that sacrifice and sitting in the gunners turret he is allowed to view the country in ways many servicemembers do not.

Guardians of convoys

Written by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Laura Goodgame Regional Command-East Public Affairs Advisory Team

Saturday, 17 April 2010 12:45 - Last Updated Sunday, 18 April 2010 04:57

“The weather here can really make you exhausted. There were times it seemed like it was blizzarding back in January, fortunately the turret has a shield and shade keep the elements outside; the dust will get to you after a long day of riding outside though” says Rivera.

“Afghanistan is beautiful, the winter has lots of snow and in the spring the passes are full of vegetation and livestock as well as camels and monkeys. Unfortunately amongst all the beauty lies danger... I just want to keep my fellow soldiers safe during every mission, and bring everyone home in October.

Guardians of convoys

Written by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Laura Goodgame Regional Command-East Public Affairs Advisory Team

Saturday, 17 April 2010 12:45 - Last Updated Sunday, 18 April 2010 04:57



Guardians of convoys

Written by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Laura Goodgame Regional Command-East Public Affairs Advisory Team

Saturday, 17 April 2010 12:45 - Last Updated Sunday, 18 April 2010 04:57

